

Drive safe, drive smart and arrive alive

**By Senior Airman
Thomas Shaffer**

437th Security Forces Squadron

Since Jan. 1, there have been 98 vehicle accidents on Charleston AFB. This figure is significantly less than the national average, however it is still an issue of particular concern for the community.

No two accidents are the same. Each has its own causes and set of circumstances. One thing is certain: whenever a person gets behind the wheel, he or she takes on special responsibilities which often determine the level of safety for not only the driver, but also passengers, fellow motorists and pedestrians.

Keeping the streets of Charleston AFB safe is no small task, but with the help of everyone operating a motor

vehicle on the installation, the chances of being involved in a vehicle accident can be greatly reduced.

One of the most common reasons accidents occur is inattentive driving. The pressures of daily life don't go away when the duty day ends. Driving can provide quiet solace from hectic workdays or offer much needed time to oneself.

It is easy to let the mind wander and become distracted even in the busiest traffic situations. Sometimes car stereos are played too loudly, making it difficult to hear the sirens of responding emergency vehicles. Failure to check the rearview mirror may result in emergency lights going unnoticed.

When driving on or off the installation pay particular attention to the surroundings. Be sure to come to a

complete stop at intersections and traffic signs and signals. When confronted with a responding emergency vehicle, yield right of way.

Though lights and sirens do not guarantee right of way, law dictates motorists must yield to all emergency vehicles. Pedestrians should also be aware of their surroundings, especially when crossing streets.

Use crosswalks, but do not assume vehicles will see or yield to pedestrians. If a crosswalk is not available, be sure to cross at intersections with signs or signals where vehicles are more likely to stop, and always use sidewalks

when they are available.

Driving can be challenging and sometimes dangerous if vehicle operators are not aware of their surroundings. Vigilance is the key to arriving at your next destination safely.

